

Changing the Culture

*“He came to that which was his own,
but his own did not receive him.” John 1:11*

Jesus was not what the people expected of a Messiah. The one who was foretold of in the Old Testament was quite different from Israel’s interpretation of Him from scripture. He was gentle and humble of heart. Although he taught with authority, he was not the “bombastic” voice of the angry, defensive prophet. He came to preach good news to the poor, not to rile them up against the government. When he said, “Do good to those who persecute you,” he led the way as an example, all the way to the cross. He was not everybody’s buddy. He confronted religiosity and people who thought they were cool with God because they could talk the talk (religious-ease). There were folks who had a lot of knowledge but little understanding. They usually were very confused by Jesus’ words.

Today there is a spiritual climate in the church that looks godly. We can worship and sing to our heart’s content but never invite anyone to join us in our celebration of Christ our Savior. We listen to the word week after week yet how much of that word has changed our lives? We stand and cheer when we hear that every tongue and tribe and nation will be represented around the Throne but we remain segregated in our church culture. We say we believe in church government but when the man of God says “no” we bristle. We are so glad when we hear that God’s love is unconditional but we remain selective in our love. Please don’t hear this as a put down on you or the church, just a pulse check. If Jesus was to walk into our congregation today, disguised as a man of color or of a different social status, how would you receive him? He still comes to his own. He still walks among the lamp stands.

We must listen to the voice of the Spirit, not the voice of our preference. How do we shape a church culture that is inclusive to receive the Lord in all of His wonderful expressions? It all starts with attitude. Our attitude is to be the same as that of Christ Jesus. If you study his life and work into your being his mindset, you will be radically changed. Radical does not mean weird. Radical change means profound and fundamental transformation. It means being no longer conformed to the image of this world, but being transformed by the renewing of your mind. The mind is the matter. The mind controlled by the Spirit is life. The Spirit controlled life is not how much we are moooovved by the Spirit toward a new experience or feeling, but being moved by deep conviction to please the Lord even if it hurts. Following God is not always comfortable at first but it is the most fulfilling venture in life.

God is the Father. He is the Father of all creation. It is not his will that any should perish. Then it is not our will that any should perish. We join with the Father in pursuit of His children and we make an environment where all feel welcome. Let’s keep praying and listening to the still small voice that directs our steps and governs our behavior so that we might be the tree that grows and spreads out its branches so all the birds of the air can find refuge in it.